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HPAI Detection in Kansas Dairy Herds

MANHATTAN, Kansas — The Kansas Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA–APHIS), has identified highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in two commercial dairy operations. These are the first cases of HPAI in commercial dairy operations in Kansas. Initial testing by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories has not found changes to the virus that indicate mammal-to-mammal transmission, indicating that the risk to the public remains low.

At this stage, there is no concern about the safety of the commercial milk supply or that this circumstance poses a risk to consumer health. The pasteurization process of heating milk to a high temperature ensures milk and dairy products can be safely consumed, as confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In line with long-standing policy, the CDC does not recommend consuming unpasteurized milk or raw milk. Pasteurization has continually proven to successfully inactivate bacteria and viruses, like influenza, in milk. Dairies are also required to only allow milk from healthy animals to enter the food supply chain.

We continue to encourage all dairy producers to closely monitor their herd and contact their local veterinarian immediately if cattle appear infected. Symptoms are mostly restricted to late-stage lactating cows and include a drop in milk production, loss of appetite, and changes in manure consistency. We encourage dairy producers to minimize wildlife access to their dairy cattle’s water and feed sources.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment works to protect and improve the health of all Kansans. The agency has been notified of the findings and will monitor the situation as they did for HPAI when it was found in the poultry industry.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to serving Kansas farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses and the consumers/customers they serve while promoting public health and safety, protecting animal health, and providing consumer protection and food safety to the best of our ability.

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